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ABSTRACT

Educational leadership requires proactive, comprehensive planning from school executives. Proactive behavior adopts rational methods of planning that link organizational activity more directly with educational goals. The six steps usually considered as essential ingredients of comprehensive planning are: goals, objectives, assessment, program implementation, evaluation or monitoring, and modification. If a particular community is able to identify and agree to the goals that the larger society has determined for the schools, then it can easily use the six steps of comprehensive planning to get on with the job. If purposes consistent with society's needs for maintaining schools cannot be explicitly agreed upon, the comprehensive planning should begin with assessment, and by negotiating differences at the local school level, the principal can proceed to follow the other steps as listed. (Author/MLF)

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COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND EDUCATIONAL GOALS

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Planning is often viewed as a luxury which few administrators feel they can afford. The stresses of the times, the urgency and complexity of problems facing schools, and the school's tendency to revert to satisfying its needs for survival, for the elimination of uncertainty, and for seeking and maintaining a comfortable state of equilibrium are all deterrents to planning. The highly stressful environment with which the school is faced combined with its natural defensive tendencies force school executives into reactive administrative behavior. Typically, reacting to external stimuli (phone, people, messages, etc.) and responding to the school's need to survive, to eliminate uncertainty, and to maintain itself day-by-day account for the major part of a school executive's times. Getting through the school day, week, or year is often a remarkable achievement indeed.

Educational leadership requires proactive postures from school executives, however. Planning will not eliminate the problems that we face, but the resulting proactive behavior will help us to maintain control over the school as an organization and increase the school's educational effectiveness as a special kind of organization.

Dangers of Reactive Planning

A major problem with reactive planning and decision-making is that school executives who practice such "planning" forfeit their right to decide the nature of the problems to which they will be responding. Once this right is forfeited, one begins to lose control over the nature and directions of the organization. The school as an organization, under such circumstances, largely determines the nature of goals school executives and others would pursue, the kinds of activities and behaviors expressed, and ultimately the solutions to these problems. Disastrous results await schools and school executives who succumb to reactive planning. Reactive planning often produces the following:

1. Stability is prized. Reactive behavior is inertia-based. Periods of inaction are welcome, for they resemble equilibrium and satisfy the need to eliminate uncertainty

Stress is kept to a minimum. Innovation and change are not encouraged because they upset the state of equilibrium, result in stress, and require efforts to bring about a new level of equilibrium.

2. Defensive management is encouraged. Reactive strategies often result in school executives evaluating decision alternatives in terms of their own safety, security, and status. One who continually responds to stress which is beyond his control soon becomes obsessed with his own survival. The school executive is pitted against a hostile organization and unsympathetic environment in a win-lose contest.

3. Paternalism is encouraged. Defensive management leads to the establishment of alliances. Decisions are often made on the bases of favoritism and protective trade-offs. Kingdoms are encouraged and special interest groups emerge as protective lobbies. Since little attention is given to future planning, uncertainty is actually increased. Information is scarce and prized. In effect the communication network becomes a control mechanism and reward-granting device, with school executives buying loyalty from subordinates by permitting them some access to the network. People feel safer when they have some notion of what is going on and will pay for this safety with loyalty.

4. Long-range planning is forfeited. Reactive strategies are short-term survival- and maintenance-oriented. Little attention is given to long-term goals and directions. Thus while the elimination of uncertainty is important for today, tomorrow's problems are guaranteed because no deliberate attention is given to the future.

5. Educational goals assume the lowest status. The most serious result of reactive planning and decision-making is implicit in each of the dangers discussed above. In each case educational goals and the welfare of students are displaced by organizational and administrative needs, goals and demands. School executives and teachers become defense bound and

react to stimuli primarily in terms of promoting their own safety, security, and status. Commitment to other educational goals are indeed luxurious under such conditions.

Proactive Planning

Proactive behavior, by adopting more rational methods of planning whick link organizational activity more directly with educational goals, is an attempt to overcome the problems associated with reactive planning.

In recent years a new planning technique called "comprehensive planning" has captured the imagination of many educational administrators. Use of comprehensive planning was accelerated in the United States when Robert McNamara became Secretary of the Department of Defense in 1961. The concept soon spread to other governmental agencies, including the United States Office of Education. Many state and local governments, including school districts, have adopted comprehensive planning.

Proactive behavior, in the form of comprehensive planning is an attempt to overcome the problems described as a result of reactive planning and to link educational activity more directly with educational goals. Before defining comprehensive planning let me illustrate it by citing two examples outside the field of education.

The first example is the Allied invasion of Europe during World War II. First the overall goal of the invasion was established. This led to a whole series of secondary requirements--for example, weather conditions, the number and type of men needed, and the necessary materials. These were translated into more detailed plans which were further translated throughout the military hierarchy down to the most detailed planning at the lowest operating level. This entire planning process was complicated by the requirement of secrecy.

The same process was evident in a more recent national effort, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) program leading to man's exploration of the moon. In May, 1961, President Kennedy set forth the broad national objective as follows: "I believe that this Nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth." With this broad objective as a guideline, the Office of Manned Space Flight was established within NASA with prime responsibility for the manned lunar landing. Three major projects were established under the Manned Space Flight Program--Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo. They constituted a step-by-step approach to develop a broad

capacity for manned exploration of space. Given the broad goal, planning for each of these projects was initiated and integrated into the complete program.

What do we mean by comprehensive planning in education? Comprehensive planning is a complete, holistic planning process which interrelates every aspect of the educational system and projects the whole over a period of time, It requires a systematic, coordinated, and total integration of all parts comprising the school system, so that the system becomes increasingly self-determining and more effective, efficient, and responsive in:

Identifying its purposes;

Allocating its resources;

Managing its program and activities; and,

Keeping its parts and the whole in proper perspective.

Comprehensive planning reaches fulfillment in terms of a system of educational programs, practices, and activities which are:

A. Educationally sound, defensible and balanced.

B. Relevant to the needs of its learners.

C. Responsive to the delicate balance among learners, program and staff needs, community and societal expectations, the availability of resources, and the influence of state and federal laws, policies, guidelines and regulations.

D. Worthy of local (community and school) and outside (state and federal) support.

Such a system clearly results in greater control over inevitable change, by means of its calculated, future- and goal-oriented change strategies. Thus, comprehensive planning is one viable alternative for getting a handle on the direction of the education system in its entirety and in respect to its many facets. It has potential for providing a proactive, constructive mechanism for the educational leader.

In order to lay the basis for a discussion and understanding of comprehensive planning a discussion of the six steps usually considered as essential ingredients of comprehensive planning is presented, next.

The first of the six suggested steps -- GOALS.

The purpose of World War II was to defeat Germany. This purpose had an underlying philosophy which was agreed upon by the allies. At this step a policy framework for action was decided upon and role definitions determined.

The second step -- OBJECTIVES.

To defeat the enemy long and short range decisions had to be made which were consistent and would lead to the accomplishment of purposes. These decisions became objectives and they included:

A. Which of the allies did what?

B. To what extent?

C. Under what conditions?

D. During what time frame?

The third step -- ASSESSMENT.

At the time of the Normandy invasion an assessment had been made. This assessment included an analysis of the state of the war at the time in relationship to the defeat of Germany. The assessment led the allied commanders to the decision that the Normandy invasion was the best way to make further progress toward the victory desired.

The fourth step -- PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.

The priority direction had been set and so it then had become necessary to structure the several components necessary to invade Normandy. Some of the decision points undoubtedly were:

A. Allied command structure.

B. Invasion program.

C. Resource requirements including:

1. budget
2. personnel
3. facilities
4. media, equipment, materials, supplies

5. constraints

D. Organizational structure for the invasion.

E. Time requirements.

F. Program activation.

The fifth step -- EVALUATION OR MONITORING

Up until the invasion was completed successfully it had to be monitored to determine how well the invasion plans were progressing and to see where the snags were so that progress could continue to be made toward achieving the objectives. To carry out this continual evaluation it was necessary to have done the following:

A. Determine criteria for measuring accomplishments.

B. Determine and gather the necessary data.

C. Determine methods of securing and then reporting the data concerning accomplishments.

The sixth step -- MODIFICATION.

If the allied commanders had discovered during the evaluation that there were impediments to carrying out the invasion objectives as originally planned, then the impediments had to be removed or the plans modified.

I purposefully used World War II to illustrate the six steps in developing a comprehensive plan because no one had any questions about the fundamental purpose of that war and the philosophy which undergirded that purpose. Comprehensive planning is a scheme that is most useful, when, and only when, the purposes are clear.

The major problem in public education today is that we are not clear on our purposes for schools. Military officers cannot determine purposes for war, neither can government officials. The people, the society, determine purposes and their philosophies. This point was illustrated well by the Vietnam fiasco. In education, school people and even communities do not determine purposes for public schooling, purposes for public school are determined by the society at large. I believe the two major purposes for public schools today are custodial and credentialing. I also believe these purposes are more often implicit rather than explicit because our society at large is not prepared at this time to be explicit about school purposes.

The United States is still in a transition period. We have changed from an agricultural economy to a complex

independent industrial economy. Mentally, not all people have accepted this transition. Recently I was working with a school system in Georgia where the school board and the community was split into three camps. One camp wanted the school to be like it used to be. Another camp wanted the school to be what it needed to be in the future and the third camp wanted the school to bridge the gap between the past and the future. This large city school system is not at all atypical, in fact, it is too often representative of the general scene. A superintendent friend of mine in a small county system was describing his problems with his school board by telling me about its composition. One segment of his board is represented by farmers, another by businessmen, and a third by airline pilots. He said that there was no way that he could reconcile these diverse factions and what each wanted the school system to do.

However, if we stop at this point and say that it is impossible to determine purposes for schools then we place educational leaders back into a reaction position. Since, we have already agreed that the reactive planning is to be avoided we must attempt to move forward by some such scheme as comprehensive planning.

If a particular community is able to identify and agree to the goals which the larger society has determined for the schools, then they can easily use the six steps of comprehensive planning to get on with the job. If, on the other hand, a community really cannot agree as to the goals or purposes of the school, then comprehensive planning can still be a help but it must be used in a slightly different way.

Schools are so important to our society that their daily maintenance and operation cannot await the explicit statement of purposes. The war is being fought whether it is a declared one or not. Since this is so, proactive or comprehensive planning, can begin with the third step ASSESSMENT. Using this approach a community might look at a particular school program in terms of where it is and where that community thinks the program should be. There will undoubtedly be differences expressed by the people in the community and the professional educators regarding the results of this assessment. These differences can be useful in helping to establish implicit purposes through negotiation. In other words, set up a process whereby the people of a particular school community establish implicit purposes by negotiating differences in their assessment of where school programs are in relationship to where they should be, thereby establishing the first step of comprehensive planning.

What I am suggesting is that if purposes consistent with society's needs for maintaining schools cannot be explicitly agreed upon, then comprehensive planning should begin with step three, ASSESSMENT, and by negotiating

differences at the local school level purposes will be implicitly understood and the principal can proceed to follow the other steps as listed. The School Program Bonanza Game (a needs assessment instrument) is an example of one method useful for starting with the assessment as a first step instead of the third in the comprehensive planning approach.

Before closing I would like to express some cautions to be considered as one uses planning as a proactive management procedure.

Planning is a process which precedes decision-making. The planning process is differentiated from other predecision activity in that it is systematic, deliberate, and continuous. A number of persistent educational dilemmas are associated with educational planning. The planning process, for example, can lead to democratic and open management or autocratic and closed management; to creativity and flexibility in organizational and human arrangements or rigidity; to more efficiency in utilizing financial and human resources or more wastefulness of these resources, particularly over a long period of time; to building identification and commitment among students and teachers to school goals or to having a demoralizing effect.

Planning can further the development of the school as a professional organization or reinforce the school's bureaucratic tendencies. One's approach to planning as a process, the degree to which he involves others in planning, the extent to which he maintains discretion at lower levels of the school, and his ability to maintain reasonable flexibility are determinants of whether one or another of the directions suggested above is realized. Planning, thus, is a powerful administrative tool with both desirable and dangerous, anticipated and unanticipated consequences, depending upon how it is implemented.

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